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[774] some animal according to its merits in this life. They also recognize
776 with the name Ohott-at (1) (great spirit) a superior being who created

1. "O'hot" = spiritness; "tat" and "taj" = augmentative (J.P.)

them, but they do not worship this being at all. They are in great fear of an evil being who, wandering about at night, harms man, for which reason they call it Onnescilele (2) (night wanderer) and commit

2. "Onne" (hunat) = night; "sci" = locative; "léle" = patronimic (J.P.)

themselves to his service in order to win his good will."

XVI

Some Observations on the Previous Chapter

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114 The notes on appendix L written by Father Alejandro M.
101 Corrado are full of material of interest for this treatise. In them he establishes that "Matacos, Mataguayos and Noctenes are one and the same thing" explaining that in Salta they are called Matacos, and in Tarija Noctenes, while the Mataguayos themselves refer to themselves as Huenneyei.

According to the good Father the name Noctenes is a corruption of Octenai, a term used by the Chiriguayos to refer to these Indians. I find myself incompetent to argue this point about the origin of the name Noctenes; but since the Tobas and Guaycurúes owe it to the Guaraníes that they are known to us by their present names it would not be at all strange that a similar thing had happened in this case also.

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101 We are given to understand by this account that not everyone
114 calls the Mataguayos Noctenes, and one can understand that this is the cause of the disappearance of the Tonocoté nation. Tonocoté was a name limited to certain tribes only, but which doubtless was extended to many others, as far as language goes, because it was the first learned

291 or netting, which reaches down to their knees or a little less. Some men of more sophisticated taste sometimes put on a sort of waistcoat, hand woven from garavata fiber and painted. Of the same material [415] and made in the same way is the bag which they are in the habit of carrying at their side, in which, when they travel, they keep their flint and steel or the fiber and wax for their arrows and other small things which they use. When at home, at least at nighttime, they wear no clothes—possibly to keep from damaging them."

622 621 "There is no use looking for chiefs or captains with any authority, for among them there are neither any who give orders nor any who obey them—they only have friendly respect for, and sometimes follow the advice of, someone among them who enjoys a certain prestige or who is very likeable. In time of war or common danger, some make limited alliances between a few huts only, for sake of unity." [602]

582 "They marry without any visible ceremony and without formalities of any sort; nor do the parents play a role in the matrimony of their children, who marry when they wish to and to whom they wish—the women always give preference to a man who is adept at fishing, and the men seek out those women who are active and diligent in their search for fruit. Once a man and a woman have come 585 591 to an understanding they go off together into the forests for a few days, doing whatever they see fit to do, and return then to the encampment where they either set up for themselves or go to live with the woman's 595 parents-in-law. Few indeed are those who have more than one wife, even though divorce, among the younger set, is frequent. Adultery 837 684 also appears to be rare; the women do not consent to others having affairs with their husbands, on the contrary, they go to their houses and insult, threaten and fight them, a thing which often proves highly amusing to the men, women and children of the same camp, all of whom come out of their abodes to see the gestures and grimaces which the two women perform for each other's benefit, laughing uproariously and applauding noisily and gleefully the name calling and cursing, blows and kicks which they meet out to each other rather disgracefully.

774 "It would be useless to look for religious beliefs amongst a people so miserable, not to say stupid. It seems, nevertheless, that they do have some idea of the soul, which they call neusec, but about whose 776 ultimate destiny they have no clear idea. They also have a jumbled

776 idea of a large and supreme being, which in their language they call ohott-at (others pronounce it hojot-taj) which means 'great spirit,' but they do not worship it. Some of them appear to fear a sort of ghost which goes about at night and harms people and which they call onnexilele; others seem to indulge in a certain superstitious worship of a mysterious being which they call taj-juat, which means 'hidden one,' but without temple or particular place or determined time to render it their adoration. I only know that at the time of the new
791 moon, some of the Indians commonly get together to sing and dance,
776 and the sorcerers, as they call them, trick them by getting someone to dress up and play the part of taj-juat who, appearing out of the forest strangely garbed and speaking in a feigned tone of voice, frightens the spectators, to whom he predicts future times and events."

881 "But if the Matacos can be said to have no religion, this does not mean that they have no superstitious beliefs. For example, when a girl reaches puberty, she must remain withdrawn for a [604] certain time in a corner of her hut, covered with branches or any other thing, and neither speak to anyone nor eat meat or fish. And while she is thus withdrawn and cut off from the others, one of the village's ceremony masters must be in front of the hut playing the pimpin. When a
846 woman gives birth to a child she must remain lying down for a few days, and the husband must refrain from doing any work or indulging in any occupation for a long time. On occasion a woman has been surprised dancing round a bonfire into which she had thrown her dead child."

756 "Sorcerers also are not lacking among them, these, of course, being the most cunning, and the most feared and respected members of the community, who also play the part of medicasters and priests. In order to be accepted as one of those who follow so important and useful a profession it is enough if one wants to and feels strongly inspired; but first it is necessary that the candidate separate himself for a few days from the rest of the people and go off into the forest, fasting rigorously and going about day and night like a madman in no particular direction, returning then and appearing before the others pale, dirty, emaciated and with frightened eyes like one possessed. From that time on he is recognized as a privileged being who has had secret dealings with "the hidden one" and is possessed of a supernatural power which
[753] enables him to undo any evil bewitchment and eliminate diseases from the sick, it being axiomatic amongst them that nobody sickens or dies from purely natural causes.

It seems to me that some philosophers, among them, 771
Humboldt in his Cosmos, have pointed out this same fact and have given it a name which I cannot now recall.

It is very difficult to get any information from the Indians 123
regarding their beliefs: they, in spite of having a deep disregard 771
and scorn for the mysteries of the Christian faith, do all they can to avoid being ridiculed, threatened and catecized by their presumptious and intolerant enemies.

Faustino, a Christian and a refugee from amongst them, when questioned by me regarding any of their religious practices, would answer: "I do not know, sir -- the Indians are very distrustful."

The following which I am about to recount I gathered directly from some of them after having been successful in inspiring them with confidence by talking with them, giving them presents, being very friendly and having close acquaintance with them and by letting them see that I had a high regard for their beliefs. 776

Among the Matacos the spirits are called a hót, and among the Vilelas, cokss.

These spirits live underground but at nighttime they come up out of the earth and wander about near men's houses; they also enter the bodies of persons and usually cause them to become diseased. The a hót ride upon the wind, accompany storms (or [753]
are indeed the very storms themselves) and dance around the villages, huts and persons whom they wish to injure. The most terrible a hót is smallpox, against which the witchdoctors are absolutely powerless. So terrified are the Indians of this a hót that when it appears in a hauet-éi (village) they all abandon it as fast as they can, usually setting fire to it and abandoning the sick there. In spite of this [199] smallpox wreaks havoc among 164
them, mostly, I believe, because of not taking the proper precautions (which is impossible, their houses and clothing being what they are) rather than because of lack of domestic and personal cleanliness which, in so far as I have been able to observe, is quite adequate. Practically all cases of smallpox prove fatal, and that is why one sees so few Indians marked by the disease.

Every man has a soul which, after he has died, goes down 775
into the earth to join its companions, amongst whom he enjoys

aerolite is to be found which fell in the last century with a terrible noise and blinding flash of light.

Whatever the case may actually be it would seem that the wandering life led by the wild tribes of the Chaco must needs exclude the possibility of idolatry.

How could a tribe continually on the move load itself down with the kitchen gardens required to grow the onions and garlic of the Egyptians? It seems logical that anything bulky and cumbersome would have to be eliminated. How could they worship gods who were loaded upon the rumps of horses, or other mean and vile places, or tied to ropes and whipped in order that they remain docile and not abandon the tribe while on the march?

[201] Or how could its prestige and terrible mystery be preserved amidst the pellmell confusion of constant relocation? And how could each one be thinking about his daily bread while on the march and also on the discredit on both gods and priests should they be made prisoners and destroyed by some enemy in ambush? Idolatry would therefore necessarily be directed toward small objects requiring little care; but these are the very last to draw worshipful attention and never actually do so unless they are a marginal part of a much larger religious context, sparks of the unsatiated caprice of common adoration such as the little intercessory saints kept in certain of our families for their private use.

Apart from this the notorious ease with which the Indians abandon their tribe, their chief and their witch doctors, together with the practically nonexistent prestige of the two latter except during wartime or when some danger threatens, confirms the preceding arguments.

Chapter IX

Religion (continued)

For these Indians God or the devil are one and the same 776 and they give them the same name which, as has already been

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The Indians have great faith in the power of their a'hót. One of my Indian guides, Tajo ["slash" --Translator] by name (so called because he had a scar on his face) in order to prove to me the indubitable power of the a'hóts, and the crass ignorance of the whites who deny their existence, told me the following:

"It happened that a tribe was returning from a sugar plantation in the province of Salta. It was the season of algarrobo pods and one night all the people were celebrating, singing and dancing. Suddenly they became aware of the approach of a white man who was singing -- they could hear the noise made by the horse's hooves and by the large silver spurs.

"As soon as he arrived at the place where the people were gathered he halted and began to scold them for what they were doing, wishing to put a stop to their activity. The people did not like the white man's interference and said to the hayagüe ["witch doctor"--Translator] that he make him go away. The hayagüe, unable to bring this about by peaceful means said to the white who was insisting on stopping and profaning the celebration:

"'Now you will see if we are useless people and how strong is the a'hót.' He bent down, covered himself and shouted to the a'hót: 'Strike the white man down with an arrow and make him see if it is true that we are worthless people.' 'It is well,' answered the a'hót.

"Immediately a sound was heard coming up from beneath the ground, like the snapping of a stick. It was an arrow which had struck home. The white man suddenly slumped from off his horse. He was dead. The a'hót had shot the arrow into him because the white man had not wanted to believe in the a'hót."

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The whole tribe swears to have witnessed the whole thing.

It is remarkable that the object, if not of worship then at least of recognition, be of an evil nature; for in the last analysis the a'hót is nothing [203] if not an evil power or one capable of evil. If we wish to consider such a recognition as the first glimmering of a religion, then we must confess that religion has as its base, fear of evil and the desire to command it.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17
Toba S/12

ness and misfortune. Thus the Choroti expressly declared to me that if at birth a child is very sickly or deformed, this is due to its being possessed by an evil *möhsek* (spirit), and they therefore generally kill the child at once. The Mataco call their evil spirits *aittáh* and regard a monster as an *aittáh* personified. Similarly the Tobas believe that a sick child is possessed by a demon (*peyák*), or is itself such a demon, and owing to the close connection which there is between the child and its parents, this may entail unfortunate consequences for the parents also, nay, for the whole tribe.

Father Cardús relates that when among the Tobas a woman dies in child-birth, the new-born child is buried alive with its mother's body [1]). I do not believe that such a custom is practised by the Tobas of to-day, but it may well have existed formerly. A woman who dies in childbirth is always regarded by the Indians with superstitious fear, since the accident is explained as an operation of evil spirits to which the woman has fallen a victim. But the new-born child with its mother forms, as it were, one single personality; consequently the child also is regarded as being possessed. Besides, a sucking child which is bereft of its mother is also left without nutrition since, according to Indian ideas, a new-born babe can only be nourished with the milk of its own mother, and would thus die in any case.

We may of course also assume that practical considerations have led the Indians to infanticide. The Indians understand that a sickly or deformed child has scarcely any chance of developing into a strong man and a useful member of society. In the hard struggle for existence under which the Indian lives it may even be merciful to destroy him. I believe however that such considerations play only a subordinate part in the custom of infanticide, which must first of all be explained by superstition.

The same custom prevails with regard to *twins*. Among all tribes the second is generally killed. The birth of twins is among all Pilcomayo tribes looked upon as an unnatural and most ominous thing, since the Indians consider that one man cannot become the father of two children at once. The second, consequently, must be the offspring either of another man or of an evil spirit. Besides, the Indians say that a woman has not sufficient milk to nourish two babes at the same time, and from this point of view also twins are regarded as unlucky. The Indian woman, who has to work hard, is anxious not to bear more children than she is able to nourish and to take care of. In a Choroti family three or four

[1]) Cardús *op. cit.* p. 263.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

RELIGION.

CHAPTER XII.

Belief in gods and spirits in general.

I have mentioned before that the religion of the Chaco Indians is a subject strangely neglected by all who have travelled among these natives and studied their customs. Thus, in regard to the Tobas, the naturalist Azara arrived at the conclusion that they have no religion at all, and d'Orbigny rested satisfied with stating that »their religious beliefs are very limited», whereas the Catholic missionary Cardús considered the study of these things useless. Similarly, nothing — apart from the data published by myself — has been related of the religious ideas of the Choroti and Ashluslay. Almost the only author on the Chaco Indians who gives us some information about their religion is Barbrooke Grubb, but he deals exclusively with the ideas and customs of the Lenguas of Paraguay. 114

The main reason for this deficiency of our information respecting one of the most important sides of native culture is obvious. The subject of religion, if one has a real study of it in view, requires special training and a prolonged stay among the natives, and these conditions have been lacking in the case of most »ethnographic» travellers in the Chaco, not to speak of naturalists or ordinary travellers. But even to one who devotes special attention to the spiritual aspect of Indian culture the study of such a subject as religion is beset with great difficulties, and the study can hardly ever become exhaustive. Although this may undoubtedly be said of my own contribution also, I venture to believe that in the following account at any rate the most important religious ideas and customs of the Pilcomayo Indians are mentioned.

The lowest tribes of the Pilcomayo, the Choroti, Mataco, and — as far as I have been able to ascertain — the Ashluslay, have no belief in a supreme god, nor any ideas of a creation. Beliefs of this kind are extremely 776 ● 773

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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Choroti SK6

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rare in all South America, and in the Chaco they are found only among such an advanced tribe as the Tobas, and, in a certain sense, among the Lenguas. The latter Indians, according to Mr. Grubb, ascribe the creation of all things and of man to a being disguised as a beetle, but this being is without moral attributes and in fact is only of purely mythological interest. As to the Tobas, they believe in two high gods or Supreme Beings, who — just as is the case with the Creator-Beetle of the Lenguas — only figure in their mythology but play no rôle in their practical religion. Moreover, the ideas they entertain about these Supreme Beings are not consistent but seem to represent two different stages in the evolution of their religious thought. These beings are especially spoken of as the creators of the world and of mankind. According to the apparently older version, all things were made by a bad deity Kaloaraik, »The Evil One», who created the world as miserable and full of suffering as it actually is in the mind of the Tobas. Again, according to the younger version, the world owes its origin to a good deity Peritnalik, who created things good and useful and thenceforward took benevolent care of mankind.

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Since no kind of worship is paid to these Supreme Beings they have more interest from a mythological than from a religious point of view. I shall therefore deal with them again in a later chapter in connection with other myths of the Tobas.

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In practical religion spirits of a lower order play the main rôle. Of these spirits some are in their nature good, others again bad, but — as is usual among savage peoples — the latter impress the mind of the Indians more than the former and are therefore more conspicuous in their religion. The Choroti call these spirits *möhsek*, the Ashluslay *eitché*, the Mataco *aittah* or *nahút*, and the Tobas *peyák*. In examining the different applications of this belief in spirits, we find that to the primitive Indians it is obviously of great practical importance: it compensates them for the lack of a notion of natural laws. Stupendous phenomena of nature, events otherwise unaccountable to them, especially disease and death, are explained as their mysterious actions. There are spirits inhabiting inanimate objects of nature and heavenly bodies, there are spirits embodied in animals and plants, and lastly, there are spirits who are not particularly attached to things animate or inanimate but have an independent existence, hovering about in the forests or on the plains, or in the air, causing such phenomena as thunder and lightning, eclipses of the sun and the moon, drought, devastating hurricanes, etc. Worst of course are those demons who are regarded as the causes of disease and death, and

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

in their magical dances and conjurations the Indians as a matter of fact most often deal with these particular evil spirits.

These are features common to the religious beliefs of all Indians of the Chaco; indeed they are found among all South American Indians. But even in the Chaco this general belief in spirits appears in somewhat different forms among different tribes. The *Choroti* fancy that the spirits, *möhsek*, in their external appearance have the shape of old, withered men (*kihïlahs*). They are, in the imagination of the Indians, provided with wings, which enable them to move rapidly through the air. Owing to their bird-like appearance the spirits are also called *ahuena* (»the birds«). They are countless in number, mostly invisible, and as a general rule evilly disposed towards mankind. I never met an Indian who professed to have *seen* a *möhsek*, but nearly all say that they have *heard* their voices at night. One peculiarity of the demons of the Chaco Indians is that they only exist at night. As soon as darkness sets in the Choroti Indian fears mysterious dangers from the *möhsek*, who are then believed to draw near the villages in great numbers and even to enter into the huts, visiting the inhabitants with sickness and death. This is the reason why a traveller living with the Choroti can hear from some house nearly every night the low chant of some old man accompanied by the dull sound of the rattle gourd, *pelïte*, with which he tries to conjure and keep off the supernatural pests. At daybreak however the spirits are supposed to leave for the forests and the plains — with a piping or whistling sound, the Indians explained to me, which they are very clever in imitating. For this purpose the Choroti use a special kind of round whistle which they generally wear hanging round the neck as an ornament. At their religious dances they produce, from time to time, shrill whistling sounds with these whistles, professedly with a view to conjuring the *möhsek*. The Indians believe that they can keep supernatural beings at bay by imitating them in their external appearance or their sounds.

In the Chaco many weird sounds are heard at night which are apt to fill the natives with superstitious fear. The Choroti frequently told me about the »nightly whistling of the spirits« (*yap möhsek ahnäh*). The peculiar piping or whistling which is most often identified with the sound of the spirits is, I believe, produced by certain insects living on the stems or branches of the trees. The spirit of the tusca tree was specially mentioned to me, but this spirit is said to be a »good« being.

The idea of the Choroti, that the spirits have the shape of old men, has given rise to a peculiar and cruel custom. They do not allow their

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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throwing spells embodied in certain material objects, small stones, cactus thorns, bones, certain insects, etc. We should say that it is the stone, thorn, etc. that causes the pains felt by the victim, but its real cause is the mysterious demon embodied in the object. This appears most clearly from the conjuration with which the medicine-man tries to remove the evil and in which the demon is directly addressed.

An epidemic is likewise caused by evil spirits, but independently of the operation of a wizard. Among these spirits there are real death-demons, who in the imagination of the Indians wander about the village carrying off one Indian after the other. The Indians are aware that these diseases, among which are small-pox, malarial fever, dysentery, etc., are imported by the whites, and they consider that their own medicine--men are powerless against them.

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The animistic beliefs of the *M a t a c o* are much the same as those of the Choroti, but it is evident that the Mataco-Noctenes of Bolivia have been considerably influenced in their religion by the Tobas, as is the case in their general culture. The Mataco make a distinction between two kinds of lower spirits. The commonest kind of spirit, although not the most feared, are those whom the Indians call *aitták*, generally adding the attribute *slámsa* or *slahsa* which means »small». These are of exactly the same nature as the majority of the spirits whom the Choroti call *mõhsek*, although in external appearance they more resemble the *peyák* of the Tobas. Whereas in the imagination of the Choroti the *mõhsek* have the shape of old men, the *aitták* of the Mataco — and similarly the *peyák* of the Tobas — have the shape of young boys (*nátses*), but at the same time they are provided with wings, so that they can move as rapidly as the wind from one place to another. They are invisible, countless in number (*vúh*) and evilly-disposed (*tavakái*) towards mankind. *Vúh aittáh tavakái*, »there are numberless evil spirits», the Mataco are in the habit of saying when speaking of the world of demons. The ideas they entertain about them are the same as those of the Choroti. During the day these demons are not dangerous to men, for then they have retired far away to the plains and the forests. But as soon as night draws near they arrive in great numbers, although not in visible shape, dancing round the villages and huts which they like to visit with sickness and misfortune. The Indians try to keep them off by dancing, when they imitate the very movements which they fancy the demons make, by drumming, and by performing conjurations to cure patients already attacked by the demons.

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The second class of spirits are called *nahút*. They are the most feared because they are believed to cause death, the phenomenon most feared by primitive man. Being particularly death demons, the *nahút* are frequently called *nahút yil*. *Yil* is the Mataco word for death. Every death is due to a special *nahút yil*, and of course every mortal disease, or every disease which naturally ends in death unless the art of the medicine-man can prevent it. If one asks a Mataco Indian what a *nahút* is like, he will answer that it is a thin, shadow-like human figure; it is the double of the dead man. The *nahút* live in the earth, where the dead are interred, but they frequently leave this dwelling-place and fly through the air, approach the habitations of the living and inflict mortal disease upon them.

Every grave disease is due to a special *nahút*. Thus for instance, the intermittent fever which attacks people during the cold season, is caused by a *nahút teláh*. The Mataco, however, are of opinion that it is possible for a medicine-man to cure the patient by incantations in four or five days. The worst *nahút* of all is the small-pox, *otoahtyá*, a disease which has caused terrible ravages among the Mataco at different periods. The art of the medicine-man is powerless against this dreadful demon. Therefore, when an epidemic of small-pox breaks out in a Mataco village the inhabitants know of no other remedy against the evil than to burn the whole village, to abandon the place and the sick ones, and to depart to another place. When an Indian is attacked by the small-pox, the Mataco told me, the *nahút* seizes the patient at the throat and presses it together with such violence that the tongue hangs out from the mouth, the eyes are thrust out from their orbits, the face swells up, and the patient dies.

If in a village, during a certain time, several deaths have occurred, especially if an epidemic has been raging, the Mataco are in the habit of saying: »That place has been visited by many *nahút yil*». On the other hand, if in a certain village there has been no death and no disease for a long time, the Indians say: »In this place there are, at present, no *nahút yil*». There is practically no disease and no illness which is not directly or indirectly ascribed by the Indians either to an *aittáh slamsa* or a *nahút yil*. Slight disorders and illnesses which are cured in a couple of days are ascribed to the *aittáh*, mortal diseases to the *nahút*. If a Mataco for instance breaks his leg, or if some other misfortune happens to him which does not end fatally, he is of opinion that he has been attacked by a »small» *aittáh*. Similarly, there are *aittáh* operating in stupendous natural phenomena, in hurricanes, in torrential rains, in thunder and lightning,

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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776 in drought, in eclipses, etc. Thunder and lightning, for instance, are caused
821 by the demons called *aittáh tavakái pählai* (the »thunder demons»), which pass in great numbers through the air or above the clouds. Eclipses of the moon, on the other hand, are attributed to a demon called *aittáh hayáh* which is supposed to prey upon the moon. The Mataco try to frighten away both the thunder-demons and the demon eclipsing the moon by shouting loudly and making a noise, and by beating drums.

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775 The same may be said of the nature of the *aittáh* and the *nahút* as
774 has been said of the *möhsek* of the Choroti. It seems to me probable that they are in their origin nothing but spirits of the dead or disembodied human souls. From this point of view, I believe, Pelleschi is right when he says that the religion of the Mataco can be characterized as essentially a worship of souls. But there are disembodied souls of different kinds. The Mataco word for »soul» is *kasītah*. It is the soul that detaches itself from the body, temporarily during dreams, permanently in death. As a death-spirit the *kasītah* is generally the object of fear. Of these death-spirits some, which are particularly evil-minded, become *nahút* or personifications of mortal diseases, whereas others have become personifications of curable illnesses and lesser evils. It is a well known fact that the spirits of certain persons — especially of sorcerers and persons who have died a violent death — are greatly feared, and just such spirits are likely to
M turn into that particular kind of demon whom the Mataco call *nahút*. The
[764] fact that graves are regarded as the dwelling-places of these demons confirms the conclusion that the *nahút* are in their nature nothing but disembodied human souls.

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776 As to the *T o b a s*, I have already mentioned that they call the spirits *peyák*. Like the Mataco, the Tobas fancy that these spirits appear in the shape of small boys (*nätolik*), and in daily life, when speaking of these beings, they more often use the word *nätolik* than the word *peyák*. Although the spirits in the main have human form, they at the same time resemble birds, and more particularly ostriches. At any rate the Tobas informed me that »the *peyák* have wings, large like those of the ostrich» — an idea quite natural to a people who even identify living men with ostriches. Still they are mostly invisible to the human eye; only the medicine-men who are endowed with a special clear-sightedness can see them and enter into communication with them. The whole world swarms with these mysterious beings, who are regarded as the causes of all evils that befall man. Everything that has been stated on this

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Chapter XIII.

Belief in „good spirits".

776 I have so far mainly spoken of such spirits of the Chaco Indians as are regarded as essentially evilly disposed to mankind, being looked upon as the authors of sickness and misfortune. But the religion of these Indians is by no means only a pure demonology. They also assume the existence of »good spirits« and these from a certain point of view are of the greatest interest. The Chaco Indians especially speak of their good spirits with reference to the guardian spirits of the medicine-men and the spirits animating certain plants. With the former I shall deal presently. For the moment a few words may be said of the spirits which are believed to animate the *plants*. Of course, there are also evil or harmful plant spirits. The character of the spirit animating a tree or plant is naturally first of all determined according to the useful or harmful properties of that tree or plant. Thus plants producing poisonous fruits harmful to man, are animated by evil spirits, since the effects are always ascribed to the indwelling spirit, the »soul« of the plant. Likewise, in the cactus thorns, of which malignant sorcerers avail themselves in throwing spells, are animated by evil *möhsek*, *aittáh*, *peyák*, according to the names different tribes give these demons. Still the Chaco Indians pay special attention to the spirits of such trees or plants as produce edible or otherwise useful fruit, which in a country like Chaco are of essential importance to the inhabitants.

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776 824 262 Among trees which from an alimental point of view are of great importance to the Chaco Indians I have mentioned the algaroba, the chañar, and the tusca, the fruits of which ripen in the months October to February. It is particularly these trees which are said to be animated by »good spirits« who control their growth and cause their fruits to ripen.

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The Tobas call the spirit *peyák noín* or *nōtta*,[1]) the Mataco *aittáh slahsa is*, the Choroti *möhsek eis*, and the Ashluslay *sitché is*. The spirit is thus identical with the vital power or the principle of life in the plants, just as the spirit or spiritual power which animates man is the principle of life and growth in the human body. The same belief is held of cultivated plants such as the pumpkin, maize, manioc, and the water melon. Of these the Tobas at any rate appreciate the water melon most, because from this fruit, just as from the fruits of the wild plants, they brew an intoxicating drink of mysterious power.

The most important of the forest trees is the algaroba, the value of which from an alimental point of view has already been mentioned. The algaroba season begins in November and lasts until the end of January, and is therefore impatiently awaited by the natives, and they try to »hurry on» its coming by various magical means. The Mataco and the Choroti, for instance, are in the habit of beating the drum every night for about one month previous to the commencement of the »season», in order, as they say, to expel the evil demons who prevent the fruit from reaching maturity, but also with a view to directly influencing the spirit (*aittáh* or *möhsek*) which is believed to animate the tree. During the »season» the drum — at any rate among the Choroti — is beaten even in the day-time. Thus, it is believed, the trees will be influenced to continue producing fruit in abundance. The Tobas again, perform a special dance with the same object, beginning some time before the fruit ripens and continuing this ceremonial dance during the whole algaroba season.

But the Chaco Indians not only appreciate the algaroba and other fruits as *food*, but above all because of the *intoxicating drinks* they prepare from them. We should know little of the religion of these Indians if we did not know the religious ideas associated with these sacred drinks and the drinking-feasts, which in the summer months form perhaps the most salient feature of their social life.

The magical power which is commonly ascribed to intoxicating drinks is, according to Indian belief, due to the very spirit which animates the plant and is specially present in its fruit. The plant spirit reaches its highest point of actuality and concentration when the drink brewed from its fruit has fermented, for fermentation is to the Indian

[1]) *Nōtta* (= *noin'ta*) is a comparative form of the word *nóin*, 'good', but is generally used by the Bolivian Tobas in a positive sense. The Argentine Tobas, on the other hand, more commonly use the word *noin*.

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273 mind a mysterious and sacred thing. To be intoxicated by the drink is
776 therefore equal to being internally filled with a spirit or spiritual power, and this »good spirit» will, they believe, protect the intoxicated person against supernatural evils of every kind. Thus the Tobas are wont to say of such a person that he has a *peyák nõtta nãppihe*, i.e. a good spirit or *peyák* in the brain (or more strictly speaking, in that special part of the brain which is nearest to the forehead), and other Chaco tribes have exctly the same idea. This is the true reason why the Indians celebrate every important and critical incident, birth and death, the puberty of girls, marriage, warfare, etc., among other things with excessive drinking of some fermented beer. The spirit is present in different liquors in different degrees according to the strength they possess. The best beer, in the opinion of all Indians, is the algaroba beer, because it is the strongest of all. Next to this, the Choroti and Mataco appreciate the beer brewed from the tusca and chañar most, whereas the Tobas prefer the beer made of *santia* or water-melon. From the fruit of the tusca and the chañar the Tobas only rarely brew intoxicating drinks. Similarly maize beer, which plays such an important part in the religious mysteries of the Avas and of many other South American peoples, is not unknown to the Chaco Indians, but is less appreciated than other kinds of beer, since maize is but little cultivated by them.

The idea that a spirit resides in the fermented drink — an idea which is encountered among many South American tribes[1]) — is of course connected with the belief that the very state of ecstasy or exaltation into which a man falls when intoxicated by such a drink is of mysterious or supernatural origin. But there are different kinds of religious ecstasy, and all of them are not inspired by good spirits but some by demons. The spirit of the drink naturally manifests its character in the effects it produces in the person intoxicated by it. The Mataco, who have been most in contact with the whites, say that in their own algaroba beer there is an *aittáh slahsa is* (a good spirit), in the brandy of the whites, on the other hand, an evil and destructive demon. Consequently, when the whites get drunk on their brandy and begin to fight, the Mataco say that they are inspired by demons, and at their great »carnival» — which in Bolivia is usually celebrated amidst orgies and fights — they say, many *aittáh tavakai* (evil spirits) are moving about. It is the same

[1]) See my *Beiträge zur Sittengeschichte der südamerikanischen Indianer* (*Acta Academiae Aboënsis.* Humaniora. I: 4), the chapter »Berauschende und narkotische Getränke».

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with the Indian himself: when intoxicated by brandy he gets mad and is always ready for fights and outrages; on the other hand, his own native beers comparatively seldom have such bad effects. As a rule they render him happy and joyful, virile and courageous, and make him forget the troubles and hardships of life. This is the reason why, to the Indian mind, there is a *good* deity or spirit residing in the native algaroba beer. But since this deity in the first place inspires the Indian with *virile* qualities, the drinking of this as well as of most other intoxicating drinks is strictly limited to the men. Women never drink algaroba beer, except perhaps some very old women who are freed from the restrictions normally laid upon the weaker sex.

The great drinking-feasts of the Chaco Indians during the »season» will be described later on, as also the ceremonies with which the sacred drinks are prepared.

When the Chaco Indians speak of their »good spirits», however, they generally mean spirits of another kind. The medicine-men as a rule speak of these spirits in the singular, meaning thereby a mysterious personal guardian spirit of their own. Such a being is for instance the *peyák nõtta* of the *T o b a* medicine-man, a kind of individual guardian spirit with whom the Indian has entered into a special relation and whom he asks for assistance in sickness and in every necessity. Among the Tobas all professional medicine-men and many of the older men are said to have such guardian spirits; even some of the women, who then exercise the profession of female sorcerers. The more the person in question has acquired power over his or her »good spirit», the more that person is in possession of what we should call supernatural powers. When, for instance, the medicine-man has to cure a sick person, he summons his own guardian spirit and by his aid expels the disease-demon from the patient's body. Similarly, those sorcerers who practise black or nefarious magic are able to harm their fellows only by the aid of their assistant spirits whom they invoke and who will despatch a spirit against their victim.

If a sorcerer wishes to harm another sorcerer, who of course also has his guardian spirit, or some other person in possession of such a spirit, he can do so only by fighting and vanquishing the assistant spirit of that person. This was especially made clear to me by the *C h o r o t i* Indians. A sorcerer who wants to kill or harm such a person, I was told, invokes his own »good spirit»; this comes down from the heavens in the

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his soul is taken up to Paradise, *Piyím*, by his *peyák nŏtta*. Similarly, the medicine-men are believed to be able to make, with the aid of their guardian spirits, occasional journeys to *Piyím* even in their life-time. The Tobas address prayers to these spirits and even offerings are made to them.

The medicine-men of the *M a t a c o* also have a »good spirit» (*aittáh is*), of which much the same holds true as has been said of the »good spirits» of the Tobas and the Choroti. The *aittáh is* of the Mataco is however surnamed *aittáh talák*, *i.e.* »the Old One», and to that extent seems to be more strongly personified than the corresponding tutelary genius of the Tobas and the Choroti. The Old One of the Mataco is not a »Supreme Being» of the kind which is supposed to exist among certain primitive tribes; he is neither a creator of the world nor a guardian of morality. He is the particular guardian spirit of the medicine-men and plays his most important rôle in connection with the conjurations by means of which the latter try to cure disease. The Mataco ascribe disease to the operation of evil spirits. The cure, as usual, is effected by the expulsion of the evil intruder, but the medicine-man's own art is insufficient for that. He needs supernatural aid, and this aid is afforded him by the *aittáh talák*.

The goodness of the »Old One» however seems to be only relative; capriciousness is one of his properties. In some cases he helps and cures or relieves the patient; but in other cases he gives no relief however much he is invoked. The great question in a case of sickness is consequently: Is the Old One in a good temper and propitious or not? If the patient recovers through the treatment of the medicine-man, the Mataco say: *is aittáh talák*, »The Old One is good». On the other hand, if the patient dies, they say: »This time the Old One was not good».

It is hardly necessary to point out that the belief of the Chaco Indians in a »good spirit» is not due to Christian influence but is genuinely Indian. At the time when I visited the tribes of the Rio Pilcomayo they were very little affected by European civilization, both in their religion and in their general culture, and the savage Ashluslay, who also believe in a »good spirit», not at all. Besides, we know that the idea of individual guardian spirits, invoked by the medicine-men and assisting them in their operations, is by no means an exceptional phenomenon among the Chaco Indians, but is met with among many other Indian tribes also, both in South and in North America.

It has long been a current opinion among anthropologists that the

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in the conjurations of the Toba medicine-men, as we shall presently find.

These conjurations are varied with other manipulations, above all with blowing, spitting, and rubbing the bad spot. Massage regularly forms part of the treatment applied by the Chaco medicine-men, and is the only action which may really have relieving effects. — Ultimately the doctor again leans over the patient and starts to suck vigorously the bad spot. He turns away, spits and hawks up and behaves as if he were going to vomit. Thereupon he takes something from his mouth and, turning to the bystanders, shows it to them: it is the arrow, consisting of a pebble, a piece of bone, etc. which he pretends to have extracted from the patient's body. The latter should now recover; but it may be that there are several of them in his body, or that a new arrow is sent into it which he will feel on the following night. Generally therefore the treatment must be continued for several evenings.

The Choroti medicine-men also invoke their guardian spirits (*mōhsek eis*), and if they succeed in extracting the arrow, this is said to be ultimately due to the assistance of their good spirits. The invocation of the »good spirit» in connection with the treatment of sickness is however a form of worship that I have studied much better among the Mataco and the Tobas.

The *M a t a c o* have exactly the same theory as to the nature of bodily disorders as the Choroti, ascribing curable »sickness» to possession by an *aittáh sláhsa* (a »little» *aittáh* or demon) and mortal epidemic disease to a *nahút*. The ultimate cause of sickness is witchcraft. To extract the »arrow» or splinter (*aláh*) discharged by the demon or his human controller is the ultimate aim of the medicine-man. But he cannot do it with his own powers, he needs the aid of his »good spirit», the *aittáh talák*. If the good spirit does not come down to his assistance, the patient is bound to die. The invocation of the good spirit, or the prayer, is therefore the last and decisive action of the medicine-man's treatment of the sick person.

Whereas the Choroti medicine-man does not generally use any magical instrument when he treats a patient, the particular instrument of the Mataco doctor is a sort of rattle, called *tahús*, consisting of a number of pieces of tin arranged round a circular piece of leather. When the instrument is shaken it produces a dull sound which is believed to inspire the spirits with fear. At certain other conjurations it is worn by the medicine-man like a cincture round the loins.

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assemble in great quantities in a limited area, so that the fishing men will be able to catch them easily with their nets.

In this magical dance we easily recognize the same principle as for instance in the Choroti dance *Avúshe*, when the young men try to »hurry on» the girls by dancing and chanting around them. In the dance *Siyúhs*, the live fish, which is the direct object of the ceremony, evidently represents the rest of the fish in the river, which consequently, according to the principles of homoeopathic magic, is favourably influenced.

A few general words may be added as to dancing and chanting as magical rites. The Chaco Indians ascribe great efficacy to the singing or chanting which accompanies nearly all their magical and religious ceremonies. We have also seen that in this kind of conjuration as a rule no words are uttered; the »power» lies in the voice itself, being an emanation of the general magical power which, according to Indian belief, is inherent in the human body itself. It is exactly the same with the rhythmical movements of the body carried out in dancing, by which a part of the energy latent in the organism, so to speak, is released into actuality. Combined with the chanting and with the powerful sounds of drums and rattles, they are believed to act irresistibly upon supernatural beings.

But there is one more idea connected with dancing. One of the leading principles in the Indian conjurations is the principle of *imitation*. By imitating a person or a supernatural being in his movements, voice, or external appearance the magician believes that he can get hold of his soul or essence and thus be able to control him completely. Now, as a matter of fact, the Chaco Indians believe that *the evil spirits themselves dance* when at night they approach the villages in order to visit their inhabitants with sickness and misfortune. This idea is rightly expressed by Pelleschi with special reference to the Argentine Mataco, when he says of the *ahút* among other things: »These spirits . . . fly with the wind, following it and producing the same sounds as the storm; they dance in a ring round the tolderias (villages) or round the toldos (huts) of the persons whom they want to harm».[1]) This statement applies to all Chaco Indian beliefs. Since the natives fancy that dancing is the favourite way in which the spirits move, it is in accordance with their magical ideas that they should try to keep them back and counteract their evil influences by performing the same sort of movements, and in general by imitating their manners as faithfully as possible.

[1]) Pelleschi, *Los indios Matacos y su lengua*, p. 94.

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Čaʔačute was a man-like spirit. He liked to steal women. One day he kidnapped Carancho's wife. The vulture went to fetch her. The spirit had a young jaguar which watched the entrance to his hut and ate anyone who dared to come near. Carancho shot the jaguar and killed it, but *Čaʔačute* still had a big bird *axwéntax*[1] who ate men just as the jaguar did. *Čaʔačute* thought the bird would eat the Carancho, but the vulture killed it with the spurs on his feet.

There was also a monster (*kaxtéx*) with a big stomach and a tremendous mouth who swallowed everyone he met. Carancho went to dig some honey from a tree with an axe. *Kaxtéx* came and asked him for some honey but instead of giving him honey the Carancho sharpened a piece of *palo-santo* at both ends and threw it into the mouth of the monster. The stick went into his stomach and killed him.

The vulture also killed another monster (*kalačináx*) whose leg was a blade made of iron. He would kill anyone within his reach with a sweep of his leg which he used like a scythe.

E. SPIRITS

54. The Welán

The *welán* are like fire by night and when they go out they stir up the winds. Sometimes they appear as white men with mausers, carabines or Winchester guns. They are very fond of fresh meat and eat everything they find, cats, dogs and so on. Their strength is very great and they furnish strength to the men they enter. The persons possessed by a *welán* become furious and so strong that they can break a lasso. The *welán* very often steal children and carry them away under the earth. The man who is dealing with a *welán* knows all the roads and pools and is never lost.

[1] Big bird with a tuft of feathers on its head.

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He can be near the Pilcomayo[1] or in the bush without losing his way.

To meet a *welán* means death. Only the medicine-men are allowed to speak to them without danger. If a person is stolen by a *welán* he will become a medicine-man for he understands the ways and the language of the *welán*. The *welán* appear only at night. In order to ask them questions it is necessary to apply to a medicine-man who knows their language. The medicine-man enters a *yuchan* tree, the *welán* blows on him and the medicine-man in turn blows upon the people. By night the *welán* come to visit the medicine-men.

When a *welán* takes a person away that person can no longer speak and does not wish to remain at home any longer. He must be sung over for a month, at the end of which time he becomes a medicine-man.

55. Origin of Disease

A man was caught by a *welán* who made him a chief *welán*. The man who had become a *welán* changed his mother into one also. One day a man died and the people charged the *welán*-man with his death. They invited the *welán* to visit them under the pretence of presenting him with a sheep. The man accepted the invitation but before going he told his mother he would probably not return again. He went to the others who were glad to have him accept their invitation. They gave him a sheep, asking him to eat it immediately, but the *welán* refused and said that he would like to eat it upon reaching his home. So he went taking the animal with him. The men who had planned to kill him ran ahead and hid themselves on the path he was following. When they heard the bleating of the sheep they shot at him and the *welán*-man was mortally wounded. Feeling how deep the point of the arrow had penetrated he

[1] The big swamps formed by the Pilcomayo are real labyrinths in which one may become lost.

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told his murderers that they had killed him, but that he would revenge himself by killing them too. He took some of the blood which ran from his wound and threw it at them. The blood changed into disease and from that day on men have been killed by disease. Before that time disease did not exist. (XIII).

56. The Welán-Woman (Pedro)[1]

A woman was heard crying one night and when the men asked her what the trouble was she said that they had killed her son and that she was going to eat their sons. At midnight she left her house and caught and ate a child. She did this many times. When the parents of the children kept awake to protect them the *welán*-woman made herself invisible. Finally they could stand it no longer and decided to kill the woman. They killed her but because she was a *welán* she came to life again and went right on killing and eating children. The men realized she could not be killed permanently so they decided to look for another shelter. They hollowed out a *yuchan* and entered it but it was very hot and they were obliged to leave. They slept in the open and the woman ate many children. From there the *welán*-woman proceeded to another village, Pozo del Tigre, and started eating children there. The men of Pozo del Tigre proved more astute. They killed the *welán*-woman and then they started a big fire and burned her. When she was in the fire the embers cracked up and jumped in all directions. Those which fell in the forest changed into jaguars domestic cats, pumas, tapirs and snakes. Those which fell into the water became rayfish, *surubi*, *piranya*, *bagres*, *pacu* and other water animals.

57. The Spirits (Pedro)

The spirits, that haunt the imagination of the Matako, are called *hoʔnat-Lele* (dwellers of the ground) or *honatsi-Lele*

[1] This tale is the sequel of the preceding.

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(inhabitants of the night). In Pedro's pronunciation the word for ghost was *na-Lele*.

When a spirit enters a body the person must sing, otherwise the spirit will never leave his victim, he will make him feel hot and cold alternately. All medicine-men have experienced these changes and the white men call malaria the disease caused by the presence of a spirit in a person's body.

Near Las Lomitas there is a dog spirit. His hair is like the hair of a sheep, his eyes like those of an owl only very sunken. He is as tall as a calf. He sometimes comes by night to the bush near Las Lomitas and catches women whom he makes sick. It is difficult to see him because when he has no intention to do harm he runs away when people approach him, as do the *hoʔnat-Lele*.

There exists a species of spirits called *ihiǫL* which look like owls. One by the name of *Tapitax* invented pottery. Sometimes pots are found which belong to him. They are large and are buried in the earth up to the brim.

The *hoʔnat-Lele* are bad spirits. They have the appearance of men, only they are lean and dark. They live in *yuchan* trees and roam about during the summer months, in winter they go underground. They make their presence known by singing and whistling. They make mead from honey and *algarroba* husks. They pile together the fibers of the husks.

58. The Man among the Spirits (Pedro)

A man was caught by the *hoʔnat-Lele*. He remained with them for more than a year. When he returned he found himself in the middle of fields. He married a woman-spirit and lived the life of the spirits. Once he went with his wife to fetch honey out of a tree, which according to his wife, was full of it. It was midnight and as the man could not see, his wife pulled his eyelashes out and gave him hers so that he could see in the darkness. To dig out the honey the woman-spirit used an iron implement like a cutlass. She

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stuck it into the tree, which immediately opened and let the honey flow out. When the honey stopped flowing she removed the iron and the wood closed without leaving a scar. The *ho?nat-Lele* sleep during the day and work at night. They have their sexual intercourse during the day. The man could not get accustomed to the life they led because he was unable to sleep during the day. The houses of the spirits-of-the-earth are like long corridors.

59. The Man and the Woman Spirit (Pedro)

While walking in a forest one day a man met a woman who told him her husband was out hunting. She asked him to sleep with her. They slept together and the woman told the man that he must go as her husband would return soon, but that he must visit her again. The man left, but on his way he felt excited again and his penis became erect. He ran back to the woman's house and slept with her once more. When they were through she told him that he must hurry for her husband was now quite near. She promised to send him his son in two days. The man ran away as fast as he could but he heard a storm coming up and realized that it was the woman's husband chasing him. The man hid in a hole which he covered with *caraguatá* (Bromelia) leaves. The storm passed by without seeing him. The man set out again on his journey. Early in the morning of the following day the woman's son was delivered. At noon the child was grown up. His mother told him where his father lived and asked him to go there but to come back in four or five days. The child obeyed. When he got back to his mother he heard that his father had taken sick after his departure. No one had told him but he knew nevertheless. He returned to his father and cured him. When his father was well again they went to the forest to get some honey. Because he was the son of a man and a spirit the child always knew just where to find honey. The spirits hear the buzzing of the bees produced by their

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539 small spinning tops. They found plenty of honey. The
773 child then returned to his mother's house. The father became ill again and the medicine-man who attended him was very ignorant so the man died. The son heard of it and returned to his father's village to punish the people who let his father die. He started an epidemic of smallpox which killed everybody except his father's family. One man from the village took refuge in another village, but he died anyway, although the people who had received him were not harmed. The son did not kill all the Matako, he destroyed only the men who had not taken good care of his father. The woman, her husband and the child were spirits.

60. The Wood-spirit (Pedro)

539 *Ča?ačute*[1] is a bush-spirit in human form. *Ča?ačute's*
773 father was old and ill. The cause of his sickness was the dirty and worn condition of the jaguar skin on which he
776 slept. A new skin was needed to make him well again. *Ča?ačute* went to hunt a jaguar. He asked people he met on the road to show him the jaguar's tracks, which they did. When he arrived at the path followed by the jaguar he lay down as if he was dead. The jaguar came and thought he was really dead. He dragged him into the forest and nudged him to see if he would move, but *Ča?ačute* remained very still. The jaguar pulled the tongue of *Ča?ačute* out in order to determine whether or not he was dealing with a corpse, but he did not give any sign of life. Then *Ča?ačute* took up a club of *matako* wood, like those used by the Chulupi Indians, and struck the jaguar a terrible blow on the head, killing him. The jaguar was then skinned and *Ča?ačute* returned to his father and presented him with the skin. His father's health was immediately restored. As soon as the skin became dirty *Ča?ačute's* father was stricken with illness and not until the skin was replaced did he recover.

[1] About *Ča?ačute* see p. 41.

Ćaʔačute was a tall and stout man. He never got tired and could carry a jaguar on his shoulders with ease. He was valiant and would attack single handed the villages of his enemies. His method was as follows: He would walk to the center of the village and go straight to the chief's hut. He would then ask the chief for a whetstone. On this he would sharpen his spear and then kill the chief without harming the rest of the villagers.

Whenever an Indian married, *Ćaʔačute* would kidnap his wife. His house was full of stolen women. One day he took his brother's wife. The offended man went to *Ćaʔačute's* house to get her but *Ćaʔačute* would not give her up. The brother left and *Ćaʔaćute* followed him as he was going to kill him. The brother hid himself in the bush beside the trail and as *Ćaʔačute* passed he shot an arrow into his armpit. *Ćaʔačute* died and all the men, thoroughly pleased, went to get the women *Ćaʔačute* had stolen.

61. Ḳatáu, the Spirit of Smallpox

Two parties of young men went in different directions in search of honey for mead (Spanish *jalapa*). The first party went so far from the village that they were obliged to camp in the forest. They suddenly heard roars of a man who was a good two miles away. After a short time they again heard the roars and groans. They were repeated over and over again. The men realized it was *Ḳatáu*. He is an *āhat*, a spirit, tall and stout who can go through the jungle as quickly as if he were following a beaten path. He has a roar like a bull. As soon as the men heard the roar they put their fire out. *Ḳatáu* sensed the presence of someone so he passed very silently. When he was far from the camp of the men he roared. The men heard his roars again and again until they gradually became lost in the night. Upon returning to the village they learned that the other party had also heard the roars of *Ḳatáu*. The men made mead (an intoxicant) from honey and they sang and danced very

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NOTES

I. The Spirits of the Dead

114 1) *Husek* (*o-husek* or *no-husek* = my soul) is the »god» we have inside of us when we are living. This spirit goes away when we dream. It does not reside in any particular organ but is everywhere in our body. It is through the *husek* 115 that we know what is going to happen. When we die the *husek* becomes an *āhat*, when the *āhat* dies it becomes a 825 bird called *xwitson*. The *xwitson* becomes an *katak* fly and the fly a *ḳipḳip* bird, the *ḳipḳip* becomes a spider (*xwistę́*) and the *xwistę́* becomes a bat (*asus*) and then disappears.

116 2) The love spirit is called *soitayax*. She is beautiful, all 831 adorned with necklaces and bracelets, exactly like a woman 837 falling in love. She is very fond of men and it is she who commands women to love. When a woman leaves her husband and goes to another man, it is because her soul has tired of the first husband. In the same way a man takes another wife, his soul craves a change.

115 3) Now and then the *āhat* comes back shortly after death. In such cases, he is very bad. His eyes are yellow. If an *āhat* comes back he goes directly to the house where women are alone, generally the women become frightened and run away. The *āhat* like to sleep with women. They tell them that they are going to bathe and that they will come back very clean and good-looking.[1]

4) At times the spirit comes back to visit his grave, but this only occurs a few days after death, before he has had time to go to his family house in the underworld.

5) The soul goes to the abode of the dead riding a beautiful horse, well-saddled and carrying all that is necessary for the trip. The soul also drives in a car, from one village to another and wanders everywhere. On his way to the land

[1] It is said that the *āhat* are dirty, but my informant was not of that opinion. He told me that all the *āhat* he had seen were clean and beautiful.

To pass through this darkness the medicine-man changes into a species of owl (*sinalčǫ́*). This is a bird who travels by night and whose eyes are like lanterns. In this disguise he is able to fly in the dark. After crossing the dark area he changes himself into a (white aquatic bird with red-circled eyes. When he arrives at the Big Fire's house he changes himself into a *carancho* and in this last disguise he calls on the Big Fire. They get acquainted and are very friendly. Later the *carancho* changes himself into a beautiful and well dressed woman. Big Fire is on good terms with the beautiful woman. Soon she becomes a man again. Big Fire asks the medicine-man if there is much bush in his country. The medicine-man takes care not to mention straw, bushes or trees, otherwise Big Fire will eat them up. The medicine-man goes home.

III. The Medicine-men

A man who wants to become a medicine-man must eat raw dog flesh. Ordinarily the candidate slays a young pup eats its flesh, and buries its head and skin very carefully.

Medicine dances are taught the prospective medicine-men by demons or spirits who give them their power. The *welán* are the spirits who are the most inclined to instruct men in the art of magic. The ordinary method in this procedure is as follows: The soul of a man is ravished by a *welán* and shut into a tree. There the man's soul remains captive and the *welán* teaches it the language of the spirit, then the *welán* blows on the prospective medicine-man and he thus acquires the power to treat sick people who come to him, using the same method. Medicine-men are constantly in touch with the spirits. They meet them at night and talk with them. The spirits have a stick called *laḳaaLoi* which contains their souls and this they give to their friends, the medicine-men.

Some women may acquire medical knowledge, but the Indians never consider them as smart as male doctors.

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XIII. The Diseases

753 The diseases are demons which have the appearence of
776 men but are invisible. They wear feathers like medicine-
men. Smallpox for instance is especially ugly. His head
755 is swollen and full of small holes. He lives not for from
Salta, in a cave on a big mountain. The demons of disease
live under the ground or within the *yuchanes*. They leave
their shelter to enter men and make them sick. In order
to get them out of the bodies of sick people one must ask
them what they want, for the demons always want some-
thing. One has to say, »What do you want?» The demon
answers, »Food, dresses, a gun.» All these things are to be
given him. But they are equally satisfied with only the
sight of these things and men may very well eat the food or
make use of the things whose essence the demons have
received. It would be very dangerous to eat of a dish before
the demon has helped himself. Men dance in order to scare
a demon or chase him away. The demon is obliged to parti-
cipate in the dancing and gets tired. When those who take
part in a treatment have danced for a while, the magician
speaks to the disease. The disease asks whether they are
angry with him. The medicine-man answers, »No, we are
dancing as usual.» The disease then says, »Then let us not
dance any longer, for I am to dance to-morrow too.»

753 Each thing has its *husék* (spirit) or image and it is this
774 image which the disease requires after he has stolen or
entered the soul of the man and it is this soul which the
medicine-man has gone to get. During the first part of all
medical ceremonies, the medicine-man's spirit goes to the
disease and asks him which things he wants in return for
the sick man's soul.

[124] One of the reasons why the Matako always require payment
to let themselves be photographed is that by photographing
them one takes their image (spirit) and thus may hurt them.
The money they get for the photograph may eventually

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on the sick woman. Then, as she seemed to have quited down, they started smoking and talking together. The possessed woman even accepted a cigarette.

Observations made by natives during the performance: The adornments are worn by the patient on behalf of the spirit who is fond of the colors. The songs and the noise of the bells are also intended to please the spirit who, charmed by the ornaments and the noise, gets quieter and leaves the patient.

During this treatment another group of about eight Indians were participating in a similar ceremony. They were dancing around a kind of improvised altar which consisted of a stick surrounded by four smaller ones forming a cross. The central stick was topped by palm leaves, the ends of which were wrapped in paper strips painted red. The four other sticks bore palm leaves painted red with the ends cut off. These sticks were inserted into wooden stands painted alternately red and black and connected in pairs by transverse rods. The whole structure was resting on some rags. A rolled poncho belonging to the medicine-man had been laid near the central stick. The ground for the ceremony had been carefully swept. According to my informant the central stick contained the injurious element which had caused the disease. That stick was supposed to be loaded with bad influences and I was warned not to touch it.

The dancers wore different costumes. Two of them had belts of ostrich feathers, and feather wreaths on their heads. In addition they wore bells and rattles on their breasts, around their loins and their ankles. Around their necks they wore necklaces of sea shells and in one hand they held a bunch of ostrich feathers. The other dancers wore their ordinary clothes with the exception of their headbands and the bells and feathers they wore on their ankles.

When I arrived they were dancing in a circle around the altar, from right to left, looking straight ahead. Their dance step might be defined as a jerky jog-trot. They accompanied

726 which was dry at the time. Then, moving along the left bank, they came upon the people of San Martín from the rear, cutting off their retreat. A large number of the latter, mostly women and children [727] were killed or wounded. The Yuto people carried off a child with them as a prisoner.

Divers Religious Beliefs

● 776 158 Among the spirits the most to be feared are the wilan who possess their victims and sink them into a state of furious madness. Thus, in the San Patricio mission a young girl all at once became pale, her eyes starting from their sockets. She fled, bolting into the wooded area, where she remained for four days. Those who followed her said that her tracks disappeared as suddenly as if the girl had flown through the air.

Another girl got up from a fainting spell during which she had been under the care of four witch doctors and said that a spirit had entered her.

Here is a case which took place in San Andrés a short time before my arrival. A Mataco had gone off to some distance from the village in search of a horse. On the way back he imagined that he saw against [15] a tree, a small luminous being, about the size of a cooking pot, which leaped from tree to tree and finally disappeared in the underbrush. Frightened, our Indian fled to the village where he fell in a faint and was shaken by violent convulsions. Doctor C. Smith had to give him a morphine injection to quiet him. The Indian got better and a few days later felt well enough to go out into the surrounding area. On the way back he had the same experience and suffered like aberrations. His parents, shaking with fright, went to get the doctor so that he might give him an injection. According to Dr. C. Smith, such hallucinations may be the result of kidney trouble, which causes the diseased person to have optical illusions, especially the apparition of luminous spots before the eyes. Certain strange and sinister sounds, also, which the Mataco Indians attribute to spirits [821] are really made by nocturnal birds. And a meteor, which fell into the Pilcomayo during my stay there was explained to me by the Matacos as the fall of an old man with gray hair.

776 The Indians will willingly speak about the lewo, mythical animals which live in the lakes and which look like serpents. Their [824] breath forms the rainbow (lewo-tutsax, which means lewo breath). [841] The lewo have a horror of women during the period of menstruation and if any woman should approach a pool or river in that state, the lewo will call up a tempest.

The Witch Doctors

756 The witch doctors get their power from the spirits, who teach them the magic dances. The soul of a witch doctor can be snatched away by a wilan or spirit and shut up in a tree. The spirit teaches him the language of the spirits and when his education is complete the spirit blows upon the novice and confers upon him the power of caring for the sick by the same means, that is, by blowing upon them. The meetings between spirits and witch doctors are very frequent, and take place at night.

In order to take the soul out of the body and send it on a supernatural mission, the witch doctors inhale up their noses a powder made [278] with roasted grains of sebil (Piptadenia sp.) to which they sometimes [824] add powdered tobacco. These inhalations cause them to become dazed [16] and then it is that the witch doctor's soul abandons his body and turns into an insect or a bird--usually the yulo--and goes off to alight on a tree which stands in the middle of a lake. This tree is perpetually shaking and it is extremely difficult to stay on it. A grave misfortune overtakes those who fall for they are immediately devoured by the palometas ["piranas" - a laterally flattened, ferocious, small fish - Translator] and crocodiles which swam in the lake. If the witch doctors are expert in their art they change themselves into lizards and so manage to stay on the tree. It is supposed that each witch doctor owns a branch of that tree which is closely allied with his destiny. While the leaves remain green the witch doctor enjoys good health and is in no danger but as soon as the branch starts to wither then his troubles begin.

[821] The witch doctors can predict good and bad weather for a long time in advance, for on their journeyings they see the green and dry leaves corresponding to the good and bad seasons of the year.

/214 cont./

755 went to rest, smoking and talking with the assistants, but the medicine men did not stop singing and shaking their rattles, the sick man continuing to remain motionless. The dancing was [533] resumed after a quarter of an hour, accompanied this time by the [535] rattles and singing of all the officiants and by the sick person's bells. The participants had a fairly joyful air. The ceremony ended everyone sat down and began to smoke. Then they carried away the sticks and began to take off the ornaments, first those of the medicine men, then those of the assistants and dancers, and lastly those of the sick man, who went quietly to his hut.

Note

[774] naLi'le is a spirit who lives underground and steals the [776] images of men. Sometimes those whom it has taken thus become medicine men.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness
for the Benefit of One Person

755
554

(March 20-24, 1933)

A woman who was seriously ill and very rich was treated by five great medicine men of the region.

[349] In the area around the house where she lived, about five square meters of ground were cleared, wooden posts were erected there, and a kind of tent was erected; one of the posts, of about six meters, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentinian flag. Around the tent were placed the objects demanded by the illness or appropriate to please it: a spread-out mosquito net, a poncho on a weaving loom, an old suitcase, some cloths of loud colors, a saddle, a military coat,

Mataco SI7
Choroti SK6

M /320 cont./

771 They have a vague idea of superior beings, whom they fear
776 without worshiping them; the cleverest one becomes the sorcerer
756 and exploits the poverty of his companions, especially today when
648 they are earning money from the whites, to whom they lend im-
464 portant services.

M They frequently move from the region that they occupy to
167 the Argentine Republic; they work, dress, learn some Spanish
177 and a slight smattering of civilization, and return to their lands to live as before.

Choroti

Ci The zone located southeast of Toba territory is occupied
131 by the Choroti Indians, who have their own language. They
197 occupy the geographic degree 22° 30' latitude and 64° 10' longitude, on the left bank of the Pilcomayo River.

Ci They are quite numerous and peaceful, and they are not
181 treacherous like their neighbors, the Toba. Nevertheless, they
648 inspire respect in all the neighboring tribes; if a mission were to be established at said degree, the conquest of all the Bolivian territory /321/ up to 24° would be accomplished without the need of so many small forts, which are such a great expense to the Nation and which do not create centers of trade and civilization.

Ci Father Gianelli in years past visited the Choroti Indians,
797 was received with displays of affection and appreciation, and
177 found among them good inclinations toward becoming civilized, but at that time the harvest was too much for so few evangelical workers.

Ci The Choroti are not so lazy and savage as the other tribes;
181 they devote themselves to the cultivation of a few seeds and to
241 the raising of cattle, although on a small scale. They are also
231 hunters, however, and when they occupy the banks of the
224 Pilcomayo, they take advantage of the fruits the river brings them, especially in the great floods.

Choroti SK6
Mataco SI7
Güisnais

Ci 301 302 171 /321 cont./

Doubtless through being very close to the Toba, they pierce their ear lobes, in which they put pieces of wood, and they also stain their faces.

Ci 648 [464] In the expeditions to the Paraguay they have never shown themselves to be hostile to the whites and soldiers; rather they have lent important services and it was they who saved the life of Señor Touvar and his companions when they became separated from the expedition. Therefore the reduction of these Indians to civilized life would be very profitable.

Güisnáis

M 131 101 These Indians occupy the western bank of the Pilcomayo facing the Choroti Indians and southwest of the region occupied by the Mataco. The geographic degree of their territory, with a very slight difference, is the same as that of the Choroti, since they are separated from the latter only by the river bed.

M 101 181 241 231 197 They are a division of the Mataco; they speak the latter's language with very little difference; their customs are nearly identical and their number quite small. They are of a peaceful nature like the Choroti, and like them, they plant gourds and other vegetables. They also devote themselves to the raising of domestic animals, such as cows, horses, sheep, goats, and chickens.

M 167 177 464 224 Even the Güisnáis frequently come out for jobs in the Argentine Republic, from where they also bring back weapons, in order to use them particularly in the woods, killing birds, wild boars, deer, and other quadrupeds.

M 174 171 776 [756] They have more religious ideas than other tribes, and it seems that their great-grandparents might have belonged to some former Argentine mission, because, more than others, they recognize a true divinity. /322/ Nonetheless in their great ignorance they confuse ideas, and in great fear they recognize in sorcerers a power that they do not have.